

been used 22 times more often by Republicans than Democrats tells the story.

I see on the floor the minority leader, the Republican leader Senator McCONNELL. He has voted for 13 of 17 reconciliation bills during his time in the Senate. He did not consider this procedure objectionable on 13 different occasions when he voted for it. Senator KYL, who is my counterpart on the Republican side, the Republican whip, has voted for 11 out of 11 reconciliation bills during the time he has been in the Senate. In fact, every time reconciliation was used, the Republican whip voted for it. Senator McCain has voted for reconciliation 9 out of 13 times since he has served in the Senate. It is a process that has been used repeatedly by both parties for major decisions: Health care cuts, COBRA insurance for the unemployed, children's health insurance, to name a few. It is something we acknowledge under our rules, and if it is part of the solution of bringing health care reform to an up-or-down vote—at least this aspect of it to an up-or-down vote—it should be a process that most Republicans are familiar with because most of them have voted for it repeatedly.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### HEALTH CARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the American people are looking at what is going on in Washington right now and they are wondering what the White House and Democratic leaders in Congress could possibly be thinking. The fact that we are still even talking about a health care bill that raises costs, increases premiums, and increases government spending is a complete mystery to most people. Americans have issued their verdict on this bill. They don't want it. It is that simple.

That is to say nothing of the process. The process that Democratic leaders have used to try to pass this bill is viewed even less favorably than the bill itself. So even if Americans supported the bill—which they clearly don't—they would still want the process cleaned up. Americans expect lawmakers to be completely up front and transparent about any changes they are thinking about making to the health care system.

Americans also expect a level playing field. That means union leaders don't get special deals that nonunion members don't. It means the people of Nebraska don't get a free ride bought and paid for by the rest of the country. Even Nebraskans are telling us they don't want that kind of special treatment. It means if you are a senior cit-

izen, you don't have to move to Florida to keep your health care plan. It means that Louisianans don't get a windfall of Federal money because one of their Senators was willing to vote for a bill most Americans overwhelmingly oppose.

These are just some of the things Americans don't like about the way Democratic leaders are trying to push their bill through Congress and past the public. But they didn't much like the way the bill was put together either. They didn't like the fact that members of both parties spent endless hours negotiating and in committee meetings, only to see Democratic leaders write their own bill behind closed doors. These are the kinds of things Americans have been complaining about at townhall meetings and in statewide elections for months and months. These are the kinds of things the people of Massachusetts were saying in January. Americans can't believe that after all this—after a year of protests and all of the statewide elections—Democratic leaders are still stubbornly pushing the same bill and the same process.

Democratic leaders knew the public didn't support their bill, so they tried to jam it through on a party-line vote. When they had trouble with that strategy, they went for the kickbacks and special deals. As a result, they lost their 60-vote majority. So they came up with another strategy. They tried to get around the normal routes. They decided they would try to jam it through with a bare partisan majority, something that has never been done before on legislation of this magnitude.

Some in the media are blaming the resistance the administration and Democratic leaders have faced on the White House messaging machine. That is absolutely absurd. Americans aren't rejecting this bill because they don't understand it. They are rejecting it because they know exactly what is in it.

Democratic leaders continue to deceive themselves. I saw the Speaker said yesterday Congress needs to pass this bill so Americans can see what is in it. Let me say that again. The Speaker said Congress needs to pass this bill so Americans can find out what is in it. That is like telling somebody they have to buy a house so they can walk through it.

The White House seems to be throwing out every idea it has, hoping something will stick. The President is expected to highlight fraud and abuse in a speech today. I am glad the administration wants to use the enforcement power of the government to find and prosecute fraud, but that is something we can and should be doing already—right now. Do we need to pass a \$2.5 trillion spending bill, raise taxes, and slash Medicare to go after fraud and abuse? I think not.

Finding waste, fraud, and abuse is one of the areas where we have agreement. Senators GRASSLEY, COBURN, CORNYN, LEMIEUX, and others have

been leading this effort for quite some time. Tackling fraud and abuse is one of the issues that can and should form the basis of a bipartisan, step-by-step approach to health care reform, not as a hook—not as a hook—to drag this monstrous bill over the finish line.

On the contrary, Democratic leaders should leave this bill on the field. Then we can talk about passing commonsense ideas such as tackling fraud and abuse on their own, one by one.

The fact is, this whole debate has devolved into a little bit of a farce, and it might actually be funny if the stakes were not so high. Americans don't know how else to say it. They don't want this bill. The American people do not want this bill. They want the process cleaned up as well.

How much longer do Americans have to wait before Democratic leaders will give up this partisan quest and agree to start over, to work together, out in the open, on the kind of commonsense reforms Americans want? That is the question Americans are asking, and we owe them an answer.

The American people aren't an obstacle to be circumvented. This is their health care system, not ours. It is time to end this partisan effort, listen to the people, and start over.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT VINCENT L.C. OWENS

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, it is with great sadness that I come to the floor today to talk about SGT Vincent L.C. Owens from Fort Smith, AR. His life of service to our Nation is a shining example of a true American patriot.

Sergeant Owens lost his life while serving in eastern Afghanistan after his transport vehicle came under fire by enemy forces. He was a part of the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division in Fort Campbell, KY. Previously, Sergeant Owens spent 14 months in Iraq serving with the A Battery, 1st Battalion, 56th Air Defense Artillery from Fort Bliss, TX. Sergeant Owens served both tours with honor and distinction, earning numerous medals and awards, including two Army Commendation Medals, two Army Achievement Medals, a Valorous Unit Award, the National Defense Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, and the Combat Action Badge.

An ardent athlete, talented student, and motorcycle aficionado, Sergeant Owens lived his life of only 21 years with passion and dedication. Those who knew him describe him as a kind and easygoing man who always had high standards for himself. He was the oldest of five children. He had been married to his wife Kaitlyn for just 6 weeks. Despite being a newlywed, Sergeant Owens did not hesitate to answer the call of duty.